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RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA

RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC

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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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USDA FAS WASHDC FOR FAA/RANDY HAGER

USDA FOR APHIS/JOHN SHAW

USDA FOR WAYNE MOLSTAD/OSEC

USAID/W FOR AFR/WA ANGELA LOZANO

SECDEF FOR //USDP/ASD-HD//

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SUBJECT: NIGERIA OCTOBER 25 AVIAN FLU UPDATE

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¶1. (SBU) Summary. The Government of Nigeria's (GON) response to the avian influenza (AI) remains limited but has demonstrated recent improvement. Economic and USAID officers attended the October 18 United Nations/foreign donors AI meeting in Abuja and met with representatives from the UN Development Program (UNDP), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the UK Department for International Development (DFID). A DFID officer commented Nigeria so far had spent only \$750,000 combating AI, despite much more money being available. He noted the GON's lack of action on the issues of compensation to poultry owners and poultry vaccinations. An FAO official reported a new outbreak of AI in southern Nigeria's Anambra State, which was diagnosed quickly and where the affected farm underwent rapid culling. The Ministries of Agriculture and Health recently have improved their cooperation against AI. End Summary.

Slow Processing of Donor Funds

¶2. (SBU) Peter Hawkins, DFID Officer, said there remained an "unaccountable gap" between financial assistance made available to the GON to combat AI and the amount Nigeria actually processed and spent against the virus. (Note: The World Bank so far has transferred \$20 million to the GON for human/animal-health efforts against AI. End note.) Hawkins said it took the GON four to five months to complete the procedures needed to obtain the World Bank credits - and that the GON still had spent no more than \$750,000 against AI. He observed the World Bank was concerned by the failure to use these funds and said the bank's Nigeria representative would review in January 2007 whether money not used by Nigeria should instead be reassigned to other countries. Hawkins also criticized the GON's "policy vacuum" and lack of action on AI, especially in the areas of compensation to poultry owners and in failing to discuss whether to employ poultry vaccinations. (Note: The GON was supposed to complete by the end of June 2006 its review of its policy on compensation but has not yet done so. End note.)

New Outbreak in Anambra

¶13. (SBU) Tim Obi, FAO Nigeria AI Task Force Chief, reported a new outbreak of AI, in the Awka South Local Government Area in southern Nigeria's Anambra State. At that farm, 255 birds out of 1,900 died before the remainder were culled. Obi said an FAO-Ministry of Agriculture team would visit Anambra to investigate the outbreak. USAID officer Wayne Frank said later this outbreak appeared to be an isolated case in which a neighbor's cockerel got into the commercial flock in Anambra.

¶14. (U) Obi noted that the animal side of Nigeria's AI reporting and surveillance system was working much better, as evinced by the Anambra outbreak. The farm's owner reported poultry deaths on October 9. A sample was sent to the Vom National Veterinary Research Laboratory in Jos and on October 10 the sample was confirmed as positive. This was reported to the state government and to the farm's owner within 48 hours, at which point the flock was culled. These actions demonstrated rapidity in sample collection, transmission, and diagnosis. Obi also said the outbreaks in Lagos and Ogun States appeared to be under control, and that further testing would be carried out there to confirm this.

¶15. (U) Obi recommended that the Poultry Association of Nigeria (PAN) step up efforts to educate its members about biosecurity. These measures included registering all poultry farms, the steps needed after culling and before restocking farms, and the dangers of poultry feedbags' transmitting AI. Alberic Kakou, UNDP Resident Coordinator, directed Obi to put the PAN in contact with the U.S. Poultry Association to request that organization's assistance. (Note: The PAN already enjoys close relations with the U.S. poultry industry through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's market-development programs. End note.)

Areas of Improvement

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¶16. (U) USAID officer Wayne Frank later observed that the GON's response to AI was improving overall. The Ministries of Agriculture and Health were starting to work better together, both in their professional relations and as demonstrated by the near completion of Nigeria's joint AI response plan incorporating the GON's animal/human-health response efforts. He noted also that the two ministries demonstrated improved cooperation at recent meetings of the GON's AI Technical Committee and AI Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee.

Continuing Weaknesses

¶17. (SBU) Frank noted also that many Nigerian poultry farmers still awaited compensation and were extremely angry at this delay. He said the minister of agriculture had not succeeded in getting funds for compensation released quickly. The USAID officer observed that the GON's new manual on compensation still needed some fine-tuning, as well as official government approval.

Comment

¶18. (SBU) Nigeria's access to international funding for use against AI has outstripped for months its capacity to employ this, as well as the GON's political will to do so. It remains to be seen whether the World Bank's willingness to reallocate funding, once the GON has been warned of this, will compel Nigeria to use substantial financial resources against AI. On the positive side, Nigeria may have turned a corner in its efforts against AI, and it appears the GON is moving in the right direction, however slowly. The World Bank's cancellation of AI funding, however, likely would undo much of this recent improvement.

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